

Kyodan News Letter

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN
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No. 80*

January 20, 1974

AS A NEW YEAR OPENS IN THE KYODAN.....

With the new year of the Tiger (1974) barely begun, newly elected Kyodan Moderator Isuke Toda learned he had a tiger--a very reluctant tiger--by the tail.

In his first official post-Assembly action, Toda called for a meeting of the existing Executive Committee, composed of 30 persons elected at the 1968 Assembly, inasmuch as the 1973 General Assembly recessed without electing a new committee. He also invited district moderators and members of the 17th General Assembly Preparation Committee.

On the appointed day, January 8, 16 members of the Executive Committee came. But rather than meet in official session the members deemed it more appropriate to hold a kondankai (discussion meeting) and the day proceeded on that basis. Fourteen of the 16 districts were represented by moderators or other delegated persons and members of the Preparation Committee and a few observers were present.

Chairing the kondankai, Toda elicited opinions on two primary issues:

What was the nature of the "recess" of the 17th General Assembly?

Where should responsibility lie for Executive and Standing Executive Committee business until new members are elected?

The 17th Assembly had recessed hurriedly when the adjournment hour was reached in the midst of heated discussion of the method of electing executive committee members. The question now was whether it was a recess of the 17th Assembly, or the adjournment of the 17th General Assembly.

Finding their own recollections of what happened during the excited last moments of the Assembly differed, those at the discussion meeting listened to a tape of the final flurry of words and motions. They then agreed that Moderator Toda should declare the 17th Assembly adjourned and efforts be directed toward convening the 18th Assembly, hopefully in the fall of 1974.

There was general consensus that while the present Executive Committee would continue legally in office, it should delegate its business to the officers, and the officers would, in turn, consult when necessary with it and district moderators. Official approval of this "direction" would be sought by mail from executive committee members.

Committees, whose members have likewise served since 1968, will remain as is but their activities and new projects will wait until new members are elected at the next Assembly.

Selection of the third member of the Officers' Cabinet--the Assembly Secretary--was delegated to the new officers. Toda announced that a Secretary has not yet been named and that in the interim Vice Moderator Ichiro Ono will serve in this capacity.

Comments one observer:

The tiger cub officers and the weary older tiger Executive Committee members will make an interesting combination as they seek to lead the Kyodan to convene its 18th General Assembly sometime in the latter part of the Year of the Tiger in Japan.

*Nos. 78-79 were published as a combined issue on December 7, 1973.

MISSION

Between September 1973 and May 1974, seven teams of pastors and lay men and women from the grass roots of the Tohoku (North Japan) are visiting churches, church members and communities on the West Coast of North America. The project is sponsored by the Japan-North American Commission for Cooperative Mission (JNAC).

The teams are made up of three persons each and include: pastors--male and female, young and veteran; and farmers, a creamery manager, a mayor, an office worker, a nurse, a dressmaker, a doctor and his wife.

Coming from an agricultural area on northern Honshu, the teams are concentrating their time largely in rural churches, agricultural communities and the cities serving them, in British Columbia and the western United States.

---more than tourism---

The Tohoku is by no means a prosperous area; in fact it is often described as "hard soil," whether for agriculture or evangelism. Yet team members are paying their own travel, with host churches providing entertainment--the basis on which evangelistic teams have come to Japan in recent years.

Team members see their trip not as sight-seeing but as evangelism; their purpose: to stimulate evangelism, make their witness as part of the worldwide expression of Christian faith, and exchange knowledge and experiences that will deepen mutual understanding.

Coordinators of the visits to North America are two post-war partners in Tohoku evangelism--Evelyn and Armin Kroehler, who demonstrate a continuum of mission concern through changing times and styles. Evelyn is the daughter of long-time Tohoku missionaries Cornelia and Gilbert Schroer, while Armin follows in the footsteps of Christopher Noss, a pioneer agricultural missionary in the Tohoku from 1896 through 1934.

From their furlough base in Tacoma, Washington, Evelyn and Armin have cooperated with local planning committees and assisted in interpreting for hosts and Japanese guests.

---ecumenical encounter---

Scheduled on the concept of "ecumenical encounter," the teams are attending and meeting with churches of various denominations and ethnic groups, including, of course, Japanese American churches, but also American Indian churches, and others in which ethnic groups and services are combined.

In the Northwest, their visits have included a salmon hatchery, a mint farm, a fruit farm, a beef cattle ranch.

One team met with Rev. Bob Yamashita, of the Tacoma Community House, and heard of the center's work with some 2,000-3,000 brides who have gone to the U.S. since the end of the war as wives of American military and are now located at bases in the Tacoma area.

---country people like ourselves---

What many have liked best is the experience of staying in homes and "talking with country people like ourselves."

Dialog sessions often prove too short for all the questions raised by both sides. The Japanese have admired some elements of Western life but openly questioned others:

I feel that Christianity is strong because its roots have sunk deeply into the life and agricultural patterns of the country.

--Mr. Fujisaki, farmer and educator

In an area where, in a space of 200 miles, there are only 4 towns, the sight of a whole family leaving together for church symbolized for me the vitality of their faith.

--Rev. Takahashi, pastor

Why does the U.S. encourage Japan to rearm when our Peace Constitution rejects war as a means of settling international disputes? I have experienced the horrors of war (of 1,200 in my outfit, only 35 came back to Japan alive), and I feel we must do all we can to avoid war. We must enlarge the circle of those who believe in Jesus Christ and His love, so that true peace can come.

--Mr. Yamauchi, creamery manager

I feel the seeds of 100 years of evangelism are just beginning to sprout in Japan and look forward to the 21st century as the century of the evangelization of the Orient. But I think it is necessary for us to take more seriously than we have the Buddhist philosophy that under-

lies Oriental culture and history.

--Mr. Sugawara, Mayor

In one Sunday school, a student mistook the Japanese for Eskimos. Observed Pastor Takahashi, That comment made me reflect again on the links my ancestors had. I realized that Japanese and Eskimos do look a lot a like.

Armin Kroehler reported that North American churches found the experience of meeting with the Japanese Christians very significant. But he added: It's hard for us to make the shift when we who have lost our faith are confronted by these Japanese who are so certain of their faith and of His mastery of the future of history.

And Dr. In Ha Lee, of the Korean Christian Church in Japan, hearing the report made by one team at the JNAC meeting in New York, observed, I haven't seen this much enthusiasm for evangelism in the church in Japan before. The program may also have an effect on evangelistic efforts within Japan.

Shinto no Tomo Writer Junko Takamizawa and Photographer Shotaru Ikeda accompanied one team to produce features for the January and February issues of the Kyodan's magazine for the laity. They also visited some 20 Japanese American churches, whose activities and members are also being introduced to their readers.

JAPANESE PRESENCE IN THAILAND TAKES VARIOUS FORMS

On January 9--the very day Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka was meeting with Thai students infuriated by Japanese business tactics, the president of Thailand Theological Seminary of the Church of Christ in Thailand visited Kyodan headquarters in Tokyo.

Among other things on the agenda was the work of Rev. Kenichiro Mochizuki, of the Kyodan, who is teaching and serving as head of the department of theology at the Seminary located at Chiang Mai.

While Japanese newspapers reverberated with headlines and wirephotos of the reactions to Tanaka's visit, and TV commentators reported the high level of anti-Japanese feeling, Seminary President John Hamlin told members of the Kyodan Committee for Ecumenical Ministries that the Thai church and seminary value Mochizuki's work highly and look forward to his continuing for a third term.

Mochizuki is supported by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, the United Presbyterian Church, U.S., The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Division of Overseas Ministries, the Church of Christ in Thailand and the Kyodan.

what has been -- IN THE KYODAN -- what is to be

I. Coming Events

Christians to observe February 11, "National Foundation Day" with local meetings on theme: what does the Yasukuni problem mean to us Japanese and our struggle with the existing emperor system (Shimpo 1/19)

II. Recent Events

Evangelism

Shiokaritoge, highly rated movie based on Ayako Miura's novel, is being shown in commercial theatres under evangelistic sponsorship (Shimbun 12/8)

Kyodan

Executive committee members, new officers and district representatives discuss 1) nature of 17th General Assembly closing and 2) entrusting of major responsibility to officers until new Executive is elected (Shimpo 1/19, Shimbun 1/19)

Overseas

JBC Secretary Hirai reports on Asia communicators' concern with promoting awareness of Asia population problem, at Philippines' meeting (Shimpo 1/19)

Seven teams of Tohoku laymen, laywomen and ministers make evangelistic trip to western North America between Sept. '73 and May '74 (Shinto no Tomo 1/74, 2/74, Kyodan News Letter 1/74)

Publishing

Sunday School children's rally celebrates achievement of 25,000-circulation by Seito no Tomo (Friend of the student) (Shimpo 12/8)

Seminary

Nine German and Swiss theological professors write open letter asking reconsideration of decision to close Aoyama Gakuin Dept. of Theology (Shimpo 12/15)

Social

Series on problems of not-yet-liberated Japanese and attempts to broaden the base of the struggle for their rights (Shimpo 12/8, 12/15, 12/19)

Young Christian Koreans in Japan lead criticism of Japanese-Korean government relations and suppression in Korea (Shimpo 1/19)

Statistics

Urban areas are most conspicuous in decrease of members as new Kyodan statistics are studied (Shimpo 12/15, Shimbun 1/19)

Enclosed with this issue is the Index to 1973 issues of the Kyodan News Letter.